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**ABSTRACT**

A method for data communications includes receiving a time-division-multiplexed (TDM) input signal on a first circuit, the signal including an input sequence of frames of data, each such frame divided into sections for carrying respective sub-rate payloads. After determining which of the sections are active, such that the data in the sub-rate payloads of the active sections include user data, and which of the sections are inactive, the user data in the active sections are encapsulated into data packets for transmission over a packet network, while omitting from the packets at least some of the data from the inactive sections.